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Access

Magazine
April 2015

Wonder whether
girls can wrestle?
Check out...

Girls Kickin' Butt

A woman with
Inspiration more
than skin deep

Salvation in Ink



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Editor's Word

Last month was International Women's Day, which is why Access decided to celebrate women throughout this first issue by spotlighting women in San Jose. These women are fighting stereotypes and showing the world around them that they can be whatever they want to be without stereotypical reservations. See *Wonder the Wrestler* by Rain Stites on pages 4 and 5. Typically a male-dominated tattoo artist's world, writer Anastasiya Rakova found a talented female artist, Marina Fomina (pages 6 and 7) who left a career in art education in favor of inking bodies. Writer Marti Malloy, also an Olympic Bronze medalist in Judo, breaks the myth that confidence only belongs to men in her opinion piece on page 8. Photographer Tracy (Ziying) Yeun captured emotion, spirit and female confidence in her work throughout this issue. Not always "ManJose" – this community boasts over one million citizens with more than half of them male – Access features women who play a significant role when it comes to gender equality.

Charleen Earley



WRESTLER WONDER

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Forget frilly dresses and tea parties, females are making their mark in the world of professional wrestling.

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Meet Marina – art educator turned tattoo artist keeps the hope of successful female artists alive.

Marti Malloy writes about how women find confidence through self-empowerment.

"She who tells a story"

Stereotypes are challenged in a gallery featuring a dozen women artists from the Middle East

by Rain Stites

The Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University is currently hosting the "She Who Tells a Story" exhibit. The 81-piece-collection showcases 12 female photographers native to various countries within the Middle East in attempt to debunk a Westernized ideology of what it means to be a woman in this part of the world.

Inspired by misconstrued media reports, which tend to focus on violence rather than capturing the true sense of a place and its people, these women hope to bring life to the place they call home. "It really introduces a view of the middle east that we don't see in our (American) media everyday," Gail Walker, tour docent of the gallery, says.

Through the use of both staged and documentary photography, the photographers hope to illustrate the story of many with one same notion: not all is as it seems.

In the face of adversity, these photographs offer a voice to the otherwise silenced. "She" does not merely tell a story, but exposes a world through the art of photography. It exposes our world through the eyes of different women with different stories.

The exhibit will remain at Cantor Arts Center Wednesday through Sunday until May 04.



Rain Stites

This photo of *Bullet Revisited 3*, photographed by Lalla Essaydi, includes Islamic calligraphy and poses.

Continued: Community reaction

Attendees of the gallery reflect on "She Who Tells a Story"

The disconnect between the expected norms of every day and the uncertainty of what exists beyond our realm of familiarity can create a gap between "us" and "them." However, what does this notion mean—to be like us?

Jane Wining, gallery attendee from St. Charles, Ill. said because of what they wear, the women portrayed in the photographs would stand out negatively in her hometown. She describes how appearance alone can shape an ideal about a person. In her hometown, she said "These people would be very suspect because they look different than my neighbors."

That's what is so important about having an exhibition such as this, she said, Multicultural places such as the Bay Area are more diversely exposed. Louise Sohutz said her hometown is not exposed at all. "(Jane and I are) from the midwest and more rural kinds of areas," she said. "You would not see this kind of thing there."

This exposure helps to create unity. Betsy Landergrén, exhibit attendee of Los Altos, expanded on the idea. "It's one world," she said. "As women, we've always been fighting for our equality. These young women have a whole an entire different outlook on things."

Gail Walker, tour docent of the gallery said the exhibit can help bridge the gap between the divided Eastern and Western worlds. "It's important that we [are] able to look at other people the way we look at ourselves," Walker said. "Many people can look at the same photograph and come away with something different."

Rain Stites

This photo of a photo shows three women practice aerobics in the *Women of Gaza* series pieced together by Jordanian photographer Tanya Habjouqa.

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1 2 3 Wonder

by Rain Stites

Tangled between the thick ropes, two women struggle for control. Smack— one woman's back is slammed to the floor as the other woman pins her down.

One. Two. Three. The bell dings and the crowd roars with excitement. Cheeks black with mascara and hair dripping sweat, Brittany Wonder lifts herself off the other woman's motionless body and stumbles to the ring's edge to catch her breath. The referee lifts her right arm. "The winner ... Ultra Girl Brittany Wonder!"

"Whenever I tell anybody I'm a professional wrestler they look at me like I'm crazy," Wonder laughed.

Without prior knowledge, I probably wouldn't have believed her either.

I expected Wonder to be a Hulk Hogan look alike— massive muscles, clenched teeth and bulging eyes. Because she's a woman, I decided Wonder would meet every detail of my preconceived description minus, Hogan's handle bar mustache and shiny bald head.

Contrary to my over-the-top imagination, Wonder met me with a smile and a big hug. She wasn't big or scary.

Once we started talking, I began to understand the fire that ignited her passion to pursue a professional wrestling career.

Wonder has been a starry-eyed wrestling fan since her youth when her mother would take her to matches. At age 15, she began training to become a professional.

A few bumps along the way however, led Wonder to decide it was time to be a "grown-up" and get a "real job." Her love for the sport never died though and when a friend offered her an opportunity to start training again, she couldn't refuse.

"I kinda ran away from home with a backpack and a paycheck to be a pro wrestler," Wonder said.

She now lives in Sacramento and trains at the same ring in Martinez, Calif. that her mom took her to as a kid.

Wonder wrestles within the independent or "indy" circuit. It includes any professional wrestling company smaller than a major televised promotion, like World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE).

Flaunting crazy costumes, makeup, and over-the-top character portrayals, the indy circuit offers what major professional circuits do, just in a more intimate setting. Wonder now trains and performs with the company, Action Coast Empire (ACE).

Tim Bartlett, of ACE's Devil Mountain Wrestling division in Martinez, Calif. and a professional wrestler himself, describes Wonder as one of the toughest wrestlers he's ever seen. "She can hold her own with just about anybody," he said.

Wonder is known as an "inter-gender" wrestler, meaning she competes against women and men.

"[Girls] wrestle really hard because we know that most people expect us to go out there and cat fight and roll around on the mat. That's totally not what we're trained to do," she said.

The audience tends to get their 'panties in a bunch' about seeing her wrestle men, she said. Despite the perceived violence of her sport, she continues, indy wrestling is an athletic contest. Fortunately, most wrestlers have an equal level of respect for one another, regardless of gender.

"[The guys] don't see us as women. They don't see us as meat. They don't see us as

ass," she said. "They see us as professional athletes that are trying to live a dream just like they are."

Wonder trains to kick butt— everyone's butt. This self-proclaimed "master of the ARSE-nel" uses what her mama gave her by taking on her opponents with one of her greatest assets.

"I've invented a billion moves that utilize my butt as the main weapon," she said.

The "Turn Down for Butt" finishes her opponent with a literal bang. Wonder makes her way to the top of the ring. Stunned, her opponent cannot run. She jumps off and boom. In the blink of an eye, Wonder is sitting comfortably on her opponent as if they are a butt rest.

For Wonder, wrestling is more than just winning and beating people up. Before each match, Wonder energetically bursts onto the scene, running up and down the crowd giving high-fives and fist-bumps.

"When the crowd gets that far behind me and gets so into the character, I feel like they actually care for me," she said. "There's 900

people who have never met me in my entire life and for that moment, right there, I am their entire world."

So who is Brittany Wonder then?

"She's definitely me just turned up to 11," Wonder said about her character. "Be good to others. Have a good time," she said. "If you're bad, I'll kick you in the face."

She loves her fans and her craft.

"I never really stopped and thought about what it would be like to not chase my dream," she said about a life without wrestling. "My life is never mundane. My life is never boring."

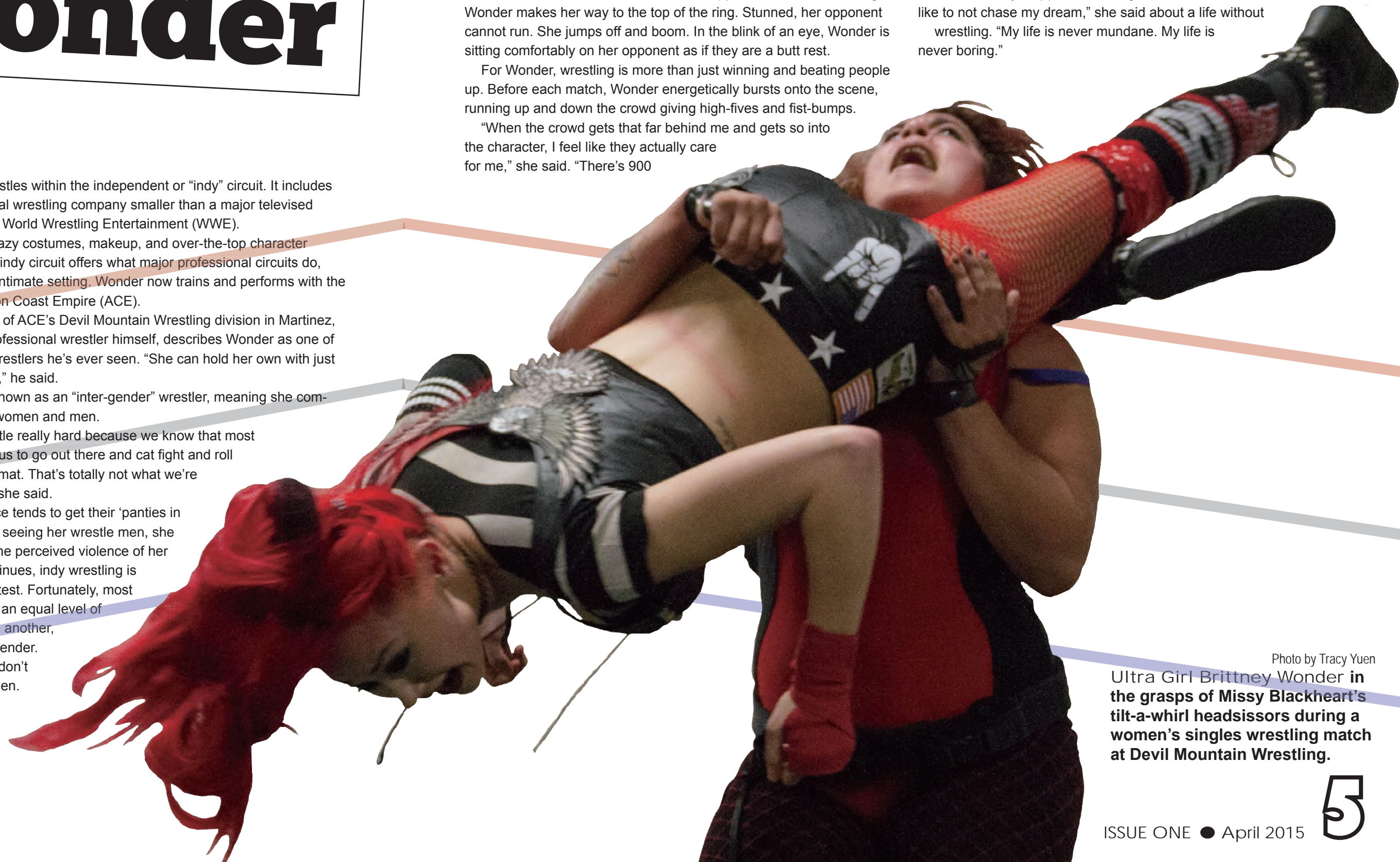


Photo by Tracy Yuen
Ultra Girl Brittney Wonder in the grasps of Missy Blackheart's tilt-a-whirl headscissors during a women's singles wrestling match at Devil Mountain Wrestling.

Marina's Ink

by Anastasiya Rakova

“When it comes to something creative ... you really need some techniques”



Anastasiya Rakova

Marina Fomina **smiles in front of some of the designs in her corner of Salvation Tatto, which she says is one of the brightest at the shop.**

The first time I met Marina Fomina, a tattoo artist in south San Jose's "Salvation Tattoo" parlor, the smile she shyly turned away from me radiated as brightly as the fluorescent lights highlighting her tattoo designs on the wall behind her.

A native of Moscow, Russia, Fomina obtained her degree over the course of six years at the University of the Russian Academy of Education (Universitet Rossiiskoi Akademii Obrazovaniya) and holds under her hat years of study at art schools while growing up.

After moving to California two years ago, between jobs of a waitress and a secretary, just to get by, the passion reignited. "It's not how I want to spend my life," she said.

This led her to the next phase, to becoming a freelance tattoo artist. Deciding not to pursue a career as a children's art educator, which was her focus throughout school, she shifted to body art, first in Moscow and eventually in the California bay area.

"In Russia when I started there's so many people who just wanted to do it for free," Fomina said.

This catalyzed her artistic career, and two years later, she's stepping up the ladder in the Bay Area at Salvation Tattoo as a full-time, lucrative artist.

Although she has worked here for only the past two weeks, her talents haven't reflected the fact of being a clueless newcomer to the parlor amid veterans like An Tran, whose old school Japanese style designs intensely clash against hers.

When it comes to tattooing, it's not all about the quality and customer satisfaction of the freshly finished design. The process in itself is as meticulous and as delicate as it is rough. According to Fomina, it's more of the skill of making a straight line on the skin, as easy as it would be on paper but as difficult as it is in the practice of tattooing. And, not surprisingly, it often comes down to practicing the art on oneself.

With that, for the sake of perfection and the applause of others, comes the inevitable ruining of the artist's own skin, which Marina Fomina states "It's not a good idea".

Still, she says so with a cheerful giggle as she traces her fingers over the ink on her other hand, so it's not really something you'd regret.

So how does one perfect the art without putting so much more ink on your own body parts than those of a client?

The artist smiles. "You start with..simple things, like a little heart of something, and just color it black inside," she said. "For the beginner it's not that hard. When it comes to something creative, like a portrait.. you really need some techniques."

When it comes to personal style, every artist has their own taste, and Fomina's is definitely unique as much as it is popular.

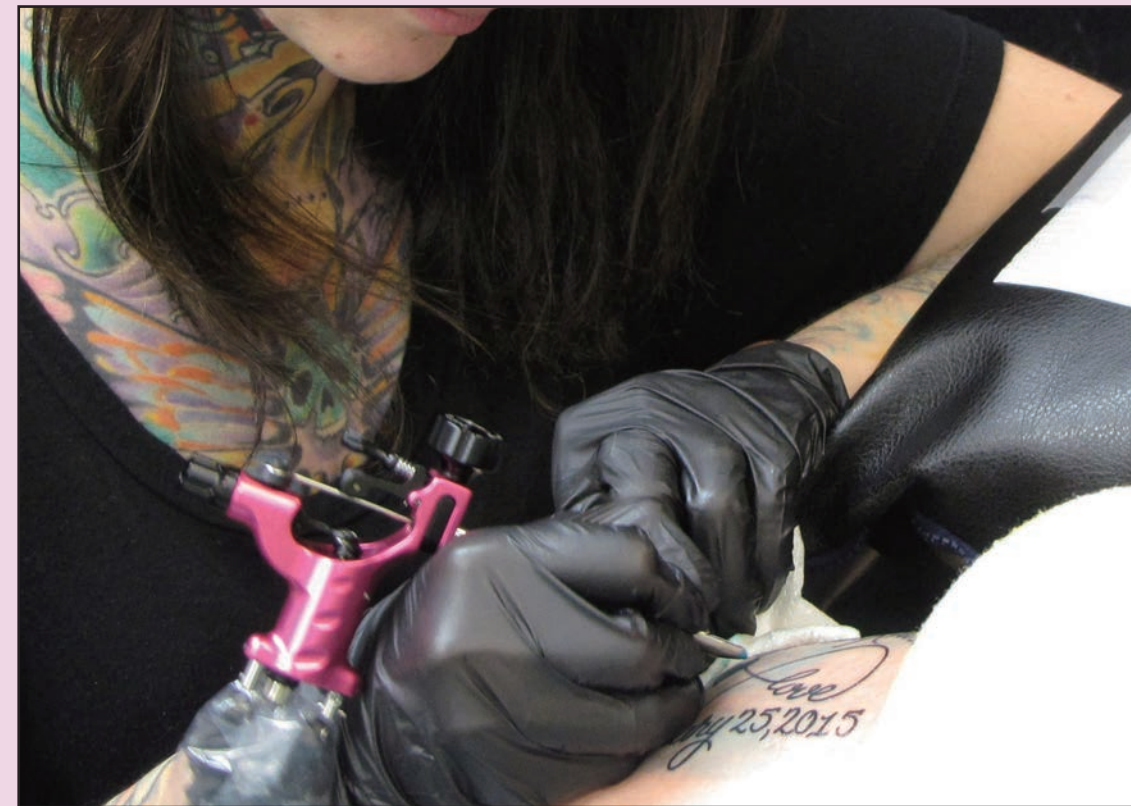
"I like new school mixed with traditional. Bright colors...", she muses. Pointing at her corner of the studio she says, "I think my corner is the brightest here", again with her sweet giggle.

For Fomina, art is all about the eye-popping, the neon-hued, and the ultra-cute designs fit for a raver.

The cartoon animals on the wall on her side of the parlor looked inspired by the 1990's Lisa Frank stationary sets I went crazy over in elementary school (and admittedly still do), which made it difficult to contain my excitement during the interview.

Fomina pointed out a few pieces on the wall and I joked, "I need to get a tattoo now," while her laughter echoed my every word with giddiness.

Stepping out and leaving the ink-fueled business behind me, Fomina calls out after me, "Come in and get a tattoo!" Maybe, perhaps someday I will.



Anastasiya Rakova

Tattoo artist Marina Fomina cheerfully but carefully sketches a tattoo on a customer's upper arm at Salvation Tattoo parlor.

TAT U

Get schooled on tattoos with this info from facts.randomhistory.com's facts about tattoos.

The word "tattoo" derives from the Polynesian word "ta" ("to strike"), which describes the sound of a tattooing spike being knocked on. The first recorded references to the word "tattoo" is in the papers of Joseph Banks (1743-1820), a naturalist aboard Captain Cook's ship. Before Captain Cook brought the word to Europe, tattoos in the West were known as "pricks" or "marks."

The Latin word for "tattoo" is *stigma*



Marti's Musings

by Marti Malloy

Last month, International Women's Day (IWD) was observed on March 8. It celebrated the incredibly diverse achievements of women everywhere and from every walk of life.

Empowerment is one of the main ideals of IWD. To be empowered is to be given power or authority. It's an important concept and one that has been at the forefront of equal rights for women, but what does it mean to be an empowered woman?

I think it has a lot to do with self-confidence in one's abilities, whatever they may be. However, the characterization of an empowering presence is often reserved for men.

Confident people walk into a room and make a wave with their presence alone; this requires a complete sense of worth and is rooted in an inherent belief in one's self and ability. These are not ideals that, until recently, were instilled in women the way they have always been in men.

I think we unknowingly sense confidence in others as well. Most of us can think of at least one of these superhero-like specimens in our lives, they exude an aura of invincibility and a vague sense of cool self-assured poise.

I used to think confidence came from success, but I've come to realize it's not success that makes one confident, it's actually the process we go through to become successful. When it really comes down to it, successful people have worked hard, sacrificed, and learned important lessons through-

out that process. It's their trials and errors that make them strong and subsequently confident. Historically, these characteristics are not something society valued in women.

To me, there is nothing more empowering than struggling, failing and wanting to give up, and yet refusing to do so. Society has managed to glaze over this struggle with our identifications of success or hard work becoming misrepresented via over-consumptive digital media. The over sharing and posting of images and ideals to our fans, followers or stalkers, provides us with a false sense of achievement when in fact no real work has been done.

So is it any surprise that people, especially women, are more insecure than ever before, but equally narcissistic?

Empowering yourself in a way that is good for your confidence, heart, character and soul doesn't come from the

acceptance of strangers, but from yourself. You have to live your entire life with you. Become a strong confident woman that you accept and you will no longer need acceptance or verification from others.

You don't need to be an Olympic medalist, an entrepreneur, a gazillionaire, or famous on Instagram to do this, you need only strive to improve yourself at the core of your being and for no one but yourself. In doing so, you can inspire others to do the same. This is empowerment through example and we can all practice it.

Marti Malloy



Marti Malloy



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APRIL



Photo by Tracy Yuen

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Ian Bagg @ San José Improv

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IAMSU! with Rome Fortune, Dave Steezy, Show Banga @ The Catalyst

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Zion I, Locksmith, Kev Choice, Dame the Drummer, J. Lately, and Mksmth @ Slims SF

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David Perez - A Reading and Book Signing @MLK Library-Room: 225

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